

The Evolution of Party Loyalty in the U.S. House of Representatives

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Abstract

If rational legislators consider the rules of their legislature when deciding whether or not to leave the body, those decisions will affect the composition of the legislature, as those who are most favored stay, and their less-favored colleagues go. The current paper explores this phenomenon using an evolutionary game theoretic model to show that rules that favor legislators who are more ideologically proximate to their parties will result in a legislature with more loyal legislators. I test the theoretical model using a competing risks duration model to show that, as the evolutionary model predicts, legislators who represent districts that are more ideologically proximate to their parties and who vote more like their party are most likely to receive committee chairs, while those whose districts are further from the party are more likely to leave the House to run for a higher office.

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Party control of the nomination process tends to create more cohesive parties within legislatures. Legislators toe the party line because failure to do so will likely result in the loss of one's job. But even legislatures in which parties have little electoral control generally have some set of rewards (for example, plum committee assignments in the U.S. House or Senate, or cash in many Latin American legislatures) the party assigns to those legislators it values most. These perquisites, because they are relatively small compared with the value of keeping one's seat, are often thought to have little effect on the behavior of legislators, who must stay in the good graces of constituents to remain in office. Legislators who toe the party line and ignore constituents in an effort to gain party perks may soon find themselves without a seat in the legislature, not to mention without the party perks.

But if these party-controlled benefits are of value to legislators, then those legislators who are most proximate to the party are at an advantage in comparison with their less proximate colleagues. This advantage, even if it is small, may affect the composition of the legislature in the long run, as those legislators who know they will not receive the party perks opt to leave the legislature to pursue other opportunities. If this occurs, we can expect the remaining legislature to comprise more legislators who stand to benefit the most under the current institutional structure.

In the current paper, I model the effects of party perquisites on the composition of a legislature as an evolutionary game. Just as an ecosystem can affect which types of a species survive and which die off, the institutional structure of a legislature can affect which types of legislators remain in the legislature and which types depart. I argue that when parties provide perquisites to the legislators most ideologically proximate to them, and when legislators differ on how much they enjoy those perquisites, legislators who value the benefit but are not proximate to the party depart the legislature. Over time, this effect will create a legislature in which most members are those who both value the benefit and are proximate to their parties, thus creating evolutionary party loyalty.

An evolutionary model

Beginning with Maynard Smith and Price (1973), applications of game theoretic concepts to questions in evolutionary biology have become more common (for example, Maynard Smith 1983 and Weibull 1997). Evolutionary game theory requires no rationality assumption, but instead relies on the concept of *fitness*. Fitter strategies live on to continue to play the game, whereas less fit strategies do not. Further, players do not select among several strategies, but instead are pre-programmed as a *type*. In other words, in a classic prisoner's dilemma game altered for evolutionary game theoretic analysis, players do not select either the "cooperate" or "defect" strategy, but instead are natural-born "cooperators" or "defectors." In evolutionary game theoretic terms, more-fit types tend to survive, while less-fit types tend to die off. This leads to an evolutionary-stable strategy (ESS), which is a Nash equilibrium in an evolutionary game (Maynard

Smith 1983). An ESS is some mix of types that is not susceptible to invasion by a mutant strategy. For example, an ESS exists in a prisoner's dilemma where all players are defectors. If a cooperator wanders into the game, he or she will be less fit than the defectors and will therefore not survive.

But legislators are not "types" who blindly follow a pre-programmed strategy. Instead, they are rational actors who respond to the world around them. To this end, rational legislators face a decision about whether or not to run again for the seat they hold. Indeed, the choice of whether or not to retire has been the topic of several previous studies (for example, Kiewiet and Zeng 1993; Brady, Buckley, and Rivers 1999; Hibbing 1999; Moore and Hibbing 1998; Gilmour and Rothstein 1996).

At the same time, "progressive ambition" has been considered to have a major effect on legislative behavior since Schlesinger (1966) first introduced the idea. Yet as Schlesinger conceived it, progressive ambition referred only to movements to higher offices, rather than movements to more powerful positions within the same body. For example, the Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee is unlikely to move from the House to the Senate in the name of "progressive ambition." Indeed, most would hardly consider a movement from the House's most powerful committee (Groseclose and Stewart 1998) to a freshman position on the Senate side to be "progress." In this sense, then, some progressively ambitious members of the House will run for the Senate to increase their standing, while others might remain in the House, believing their standing within that body is likely to improve, perhaps, as in the case of the Chairman of Ways and Means, eclipsing the standing of a rank-and-file member of the upper chamber. Certainly, then, we would expect legislators to make a cost-benefit analysis, comparing the utility they would derive from staying in the legislature to that they would derive from pursuing outside opportunities, particularly from running for another office.

It is obviously difficult to measure the expected value of outside opportunities. At the same time, however, if we could measure the value of staying in a legislature, we may be able to discern between those legislators who face greater expected utility from remaining in their House and their colleagues who stand to gain less from staying. Further, we can expect those who receive lower utility to be likelier to leave the legislature than their more fortunate colleagues.

In the current study, I posit that this rational retirement behavior of legislators can be modelled as an evolutionary process. Legislators who derive the greatest utility from staying are more likely to do so, whereas their less satisfied colleagues are more likely to leave. Further, if those legislators who derive greater utility from staying in the legislature have substantively different characteristics from those more likely to leave, we would expect that this evolutionary process would result in a legislature peopled by legislators who possess these favorable characteristics.

Suppose such an evolutionary model were applied to a legislature in which parties provide some perquisite for legislators who are most proximate ideologically to the party. Suppose further that the legislature comprises legislators who vary on two different types. First, some legislators are proximate to the party,

whereas others are not.¹ Second, some legislators value the good the party is providing, whereas others do not. Those who value the good receive positive utiles if they receive it, whereas those who do not value the good receive negative utiles.² Therefore, players receive utiles based on two variables: whether or not they stand to receive the benefit, and whether or not they desire the benefit.

Without loss of generality, assume that legislators who desire the benefit and obtain it receive 2 utiles, whereas legislators who desire the benefit and fail to obtain it receive -2 utiles. Similarly, legislators who do not desire the benefit and do not obtain it receive 1 utile, whereas legislators who do not desire the benefit but obtain it receive -1 utile.

Further, assume that when a proximate legislator meets a not proximate legislator, the proximate legislator receives the benefit. If two proximate or two not proximate legislators meet, a coin flip determines who receives the benefit.

These assumptions imply the following proposition:

Proposition: An evolutionary stable strategy exists in which the legislature is made up solely of legislators of two types: those who both desire the party's good and are proximate to the party, and those who neither desire the good nor are proximate to the party.

Proof: See Appendix.

The result implies that the legislature will be made up of a majority of legislators who are ideologically proximate to the party, with the rest being ideologically distant and satisfied with the party's good.

Empirically, what would such a legislature look like? It is difficult to measure, particularly if the evolutionary process is ongoing, and the evolutionary stable strategy has not been reached. Under these circumstances, one would expect those legislators who are further from the party to be more likely to leave. To that end, the following section describes an empirical test of the evolutionary model using a competing risks specification.

¹Note that in the model, proximity to the party is a dichotomous variable. Likely, relaxing this assumption is not detrimental to the general result of the model. Instead, the probable result is that in each interaction, the most proximate legislator will be considered "proximate." In this sense, a legislator's level of proximity will be her fitness and an ESS will exist with most legislators, rather than being simply proximate, positioned exactly on the party's ideal point. Proof of this conjecture is reserved for future work.

²It is easy to see why some legislators would receive negative utility from the party's good. For example, some legislators may not want to serve as a committee chair. Faced with being named as chair, the legislator must either accept the position he does not want, or publicly refuse the position, thus appearing lazy to constituents. Or, some legislators may face electoral trouble if they are seen as being too close to the party, something which may occur if they are so gifted. Or, legislators simply prefer that the party's good be distributed efficiently, something that does not occur when the good goes to someone who does not value it.

I apply the model to the U.S. House of Representatives, and the good the party provides is assignment to committee chairs. Legislators who are ambitious for power beyond that of a rank and file member of the House are taken to be those who value the party's good. I show that ambitious legislators who are ideologically further from the party are more likely to leave the legislature to run for higher office, thus making room in the committee chair queue for those legislators who are more proximate to the party.

Committee chairs in the U.S. House

The seniority system in the United States House of Representatives died, according to many media and scholarly reports at the time, at the start of the 95th session of Congress, in 1975. Using a rule passed two years before that required every committee chair to stand for reelection before the entire Democratic Caucus, the party rank and file deposed three committee chairs who had been put in place by a seniority system that had reigned supreme for more than 50 years. Media reports at the time claimed (for example, U.S. News and World Report 1975, The Economist 1975, National Journal 1974, New York Times 1975) that committee chairs would now owe their positions to the Democratic Caucus. Failure to support the party would mean losing their coveted and powerful positions.

But the death of the seniority system had, it seemed, been greatly exaggerated. In the 20-year period after its death knell, the seniority rule predicted virtually all of the Democratic Caucus-elected committee chairs. Indeed, seniority had been violated in the naming of full committee chairs only four times from 1974 until the Democrats lost control of the House in 1994. And only one of those violations, that of Melvin Price, can be construed as a punishment for not supporting the caucus.³ So given the relative paucity of its use, one can easily argue that the 1972 reforms had no real effect on business in the House of Representatives. At the same time, however, at least the specter of losing one's chair for non-compliance hung over the heads of both sitting chairs and those moving to the head of the seniority queue. Further, there is some evidence that committee chairs have grown more liberal since the passage of the new rules (Deering and Smith 1997), thus providing evidence that perhaps the ideological litmus test is effective.

Another possible explanation for these phenomena is an evolutionary process. Individual legislators do not change ideology, but instead leave the legislature to pursue other opportunities. Ambitious but less proximate legislators leave the legislature to run for another, more powerful, office, thus mitigating ideological queue-jumping before it occurs. Using a competing risks duration model, I find that those legislators who are most supportive of the Democratic

³At 80 years old, Price was thought by many to be too old for the job, reason enough to replace him regardless of the fact that he was ideologically to the right of the caucus. However, the selection of the more liberal Les Aspin required the caucus to pass over six of Aspin's more senior committee colleagues.

caucus on floor votes and who represent districts most proximate to the party are more likely to receive committee or subcommittee chair positions. I also show that legislators whose districts are ideologically distant from the party are more likely to choose other avenues for gaining political power. I argue that legislators make the decision to seek their political fortunes outside the House, at least partly, because they fear becoming victims of ideological queue-jumping. Less ideologically proximate legislators leave the queue for fear they may be skipped when they reach the front of the line.

How chair assignments are made

For most of the last century, the question of who should chair each committee in the House of Representatives was answered by seniority. Whoever served on the committee longest would act as that committee's chair. (For thorough accounts of the rise of the seniority system in the House, see Goodwin 1959; Polsby 1968; Polsby, Gallagher and Rundquist 1969; Hinckley 1971; and Galloway 1976.)

The chair selection process is not trivial. Committee chairs have a great deal of power over what issues the committee will discuss and what types of bills, or even if any bills at all, will be reported out of committee. And with the immense power committees have in the House, this translates into committee chairs with unmatched power over any policy that relates to the issue areas under the committee's jurisdiction. The seniority system, therefore, created committee chairs with a great deal of power and very little accountability to anyone other than their own constituents.

At the same time, the seniority process has never been automatic. Speakers, particularly those before the revolt against Cannon in 1913, could unilaterally ignore the seniority process. Even after the demise of the speaker rule, the caucus maintained the same power to depose committee chairs, although it was rarely used. For example, Galloway (1976) reports that in 1921, the caucus violated seniority on the Appropriations Committee because they felt that the most senior person was too elderly for the job. Deposing committee chairs for policy reasons, however, was virtually never done in the period from the Cannon revolt to the reforms of the 1970s.

In the wake of the Watergate scandal, angry voters were poised to "throw the bums out" of Washington. Although the voters were primarily angry with President Richard Nixon, many members of Congress found their constituents were painting them with Nixon's brush. Some legislators decided not to defend their seats in the 1974 election, while others met defeat at the polls. The result was an unusually large freshman class in the 95th Congress. (See Rohde 1991 for an in-depth treatment of this.)

When those new freshmen began their first session in January of 1975, they felt they had brought with them a mandate from the people. The freshmen believed their election was a message from the voters: Washington is corrupt and requires a serious overhaul. The freshmen arrived in Washington prepared to turn that mandate into policy. But once they arrived, they learned that an entrenched group of committee chairs controlled virtually all House business.

Most of these powerful chairs did not share the freshmen class' beliefs about the sentiments of the voters. They saw no mandate for change and therefore felt no reason to implement it.

More important, the freshmen learned that there was little they could do to sidestep committee chairs on the way to the House floor. Unless they were willing to sign a discharge petition⁴, there was little the rank and file could do to pass a bill if the committee chair refused to schedule hearings for it. Signing such a petition was a risky move, however, since doing so would certainly raise the ire of the chairman whose committee was avoided.

The so-called "Watergate babies" responded to this perceived legislative obstruction by supporting the efforts of earlier reformers to change the Democratic Caucus rules for naming committee chairs. Those reformers began in 1971, when they changed the rules to state that a committee chair would face election before the entire Caucus if ten members of the Caucus requested such a vote. Then, in 1973, they changed the Caucus rules again, making the up-or-down vote automatic for all committee chairs. In this sense, then, the seniority system remained the default choice mechanism. The most senior legislator on the committee remained in a privileged position, but could be replaced if a majority of the rank and file believed the chair was not ideologically proximate enough to them.

At the same time, violations of the seniority system in Congress have been quite rare throughout the postwar era (Goodwin 1959, Polsby, Gallagher, and Rundquist 1969, Hinckley 1971). Several researchers, most notably Polsby, Gallagher and Rundquist (1969) cite this fact as evidence that the seniority system is virtually inviolable and therefore leads to autonomous committee chairs and decentralized government. Considering the continued rarity of seniority violations since they wrote, one could easily argue that the Polsby, Gallagher, and Rundquist claims hold up even in the postreform era.

Yet Cox and McCubbins(1993) point out what they believe to be a fallacy in the Polsby, et al. logic. According to the Cox and McCubbins argument, while an inviolate and sovereign seniority system necessarily implies no violations of seniority, the observance of no violations does not necessarily imply an inviolate and sovereign seniority system. Indeed, we may attribute the lack of violations to a variety of sources, including a particular equilibrium within the Committee on Committees. This equilibrium is the explanation Cox and McCubbins advocate. If that argument is true, then, legislators behave *as if* the rules dictate that ideology matters, even if the rule never needs to be enforced.

Four types of legislators

The evolutionary model is based on the assumption that there are four types of legislators, differing on two factors: desire for the party's good and ideological proximity to the party. In the case of the U.S. House of Representatives, the

⁴If a majority of legislators were to sign a petition saying they wished the bill to go directly to the floor, the bill could sidestep the committee process.

party’s good is power beyond that of a rank and file legislator, in the form of a committee or subcommittee chair. Therefore, we can consider those legislators who desire the good to be “ambitious”. Empirically, then, legislators of different types are likely to meet different fates, as described below.

Legislators who are both proximate to the party and ambitious know that they can easily satisfy their ambition: simply remain in the House, certain that their proximity to the party will allow them eventually to receive a committee chair. On the other hand, legislators who are distant from the party and ambitious do not face the same situation. They are precluded by their distance from the party from receiving internal satisfaction for their ambition. Instead, they must leave the legislature. They can do so in two ways. First, legislators may choose to run for higher office. Second, legislators may choose to retire from politics entirely, opting instead to satisfy their ambitions in the private sector.

Furthermore, legislators who are proximate to the party but prefer not to receive the good (either because doing so places them in electoral trouble or because they prefer a more efficient distribution of the party goods) are more likely to leave the legislature. On the other hand, legislators who are not proximate to the party but prefer not to receive the good will remain in their current positions, provided that proximate legislators who want the good outnumber them. Otherwise, the environment within the legislature is more likely to be less favorable than the environment outside, and they will leave.

Outlined above, then, are four possible outcomes for legislators: receiving a committee chair, running for higher office, retirement from politics, or remaining at one’s current position. There is, however, one outcome not yet considered: electoral defeat. Given that the theoretical model predicts legislators’ choices, it is silent on predictions about types of legislators who are more likely to lose their elections. A properly specified empirical model, however, must include electoral loss as a possible outcome. There are, then five outcomes, each associated with one or more types of legislators. The table below reports those types:

Outcome	Type
Committee Chair	Ambitious Proximate
Higher Office	Ambitious Distant
Retire	Ambitious Distant/ Both Satisfied Types
Remain in Office	Distant Satisfied/ All others
Electoral Loss	No prediction

Clearly, the predictions on committee chairs and legislators retiring or seeking higher office are the most relevant to the theoretical model. Note that legislators who remain in office may be of the Distant Satisfied type or may be any of the other types who have not yet made decisions. And again, the theoretical model makes no predictions about legislators who suffer an electoral loss.

I now consider how each of these outcomes derived from the theoretical model manifest themselves in the U.S. House of Representatives and how the theoretical model leads to expectations about how each type will differ.

Electoral loss

Certainly, losing an election is somewhat different from the other four turns a legislator's career can take, since choices made by the legislator play a rather different role (See Jacobson 1997 for a more complete exploration of electoral loss). This is because the legislator, presumably, would have preferred to stay in the House, but was unable to gain reelection. Despite this, I expect that legislators who lose elections are different in some ways. First, their districts are likely to be less ideologically proximate to their party. They are therefore at a disadvantage in terms of both being reelected and gaining a committee chair under a system in which ideological proximity to the party matters. They are likely to be unable to vote with the party often enough to be considered loyal, without facing fear of losing an election. Indeed, some of them may be legislators who attempted to become more ideologically proximate to the party, but learned they had strayed too far from their districts, and lost their elections. For example, Karan English, a Democrat, represented a conservative Congressional district in Arizona, one which gave her party's presidential nominee only 30 percent of the vote. Despite this, English voted with her party in 92 percent of the party unity votes⁵ in 1994 and earned a Poole-Rosenthal DW-Nominate score that exactly matched that of the median voter of her party. Presumably, English wanted to be a "good" Democrat. She lost her next election to Republican J.D. Hayworth, who branded her as too ideologically distant from her constituents (*Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 1994).

One would expect, then, that legislators who lose their elections will, obviously, come from districts that are not electorally safe. Further, while some of them will be caught by voters straying too ideologically near to their parties, others will know better than to try. In this sense, their voting within Congress will not be markedly different than those legislators who stay in Congress without gaining power.

Retirement

Legislators retire for any number of reasons (See Hibbing 1982a, 1982b for examples). One would expect that probability of gaining a position of power would be only one entry in the decision calculus. In terms of this paper, I am not necessarily referring to retirement as ending all work. Instead, retirement in this context is better understood as either returning to the private sector or retiring from work altogether. In other words, I am using retirement to mean any voluntary decision not to run for one's House seat again for any reason besides an immediate run for another political office. For example, Blanche

⁵ *Congressional Quarterly* defines party unity votes as those votes in which a majority of Democrats vote against a majority of Republicans.

Lincoln Lambert “retired” from the House in 1997, at the age of 37, to care for her newborn twin sons. She then waged a successful Senate campaign a year later. In the context of this paper, she is considered just as “retired” as George Sangmeister, who left the House and entered traditional retirement in 1995, at the age of 64.

Factors that may affect one’s likelihood to retire include the legislator’s personal commitment to politics and, if the theory of ideological queue-jumping is correct, one’s ideological proximity to the party. Therefore, we should expect legislators who choose to retire to be less likely to be career politicians than those who stay in office, and they should come from electorally safer districts, since they were able to remain in the House long enough to face the option of retirement.

Status quo

Again, the status quo category is something of a hodgepodge. For example, Pennsylvania Democrat Bob Borski remained in the category for his first four sessions in Congress, until he received a committee chair in his fifth. Joseph Brennan, a Democrat from Maine, was in the category for two terms before he left the House to make an unsuccessful bid for the governorship. Similarly, Terry Bruce of Illinois was in the category for four terms until he lost his reelection bid in 1992.

Indeed, virtually every legislator has spent at least one legislative session in this category. For this reason, this category is the “baseline” category in this analysis. Theoretically, this means that, *ceteris paribus*, this is where all legislators would be. Statistically, they are the comparison group for the multinomial logit I explain in a later section.

Run for higher office

The decision to run for higher office is the first category of which predictions about legislative behavior are not intuitively obvious (See Rohde 1979 and Francis, et al. 1994 for earlier treatments of these issues). It is therefore the first one which yields interesting hypotheses. According to the evolutionary theory, legislators who remain ambitious but see little likelihood for gaining power within the House will seek their electoral fortunes by running for offices other than their House seats. We should expect these legislators to be good campaigners, but not particularly interested in day-to-day politics in the House, since their sights are set elsewhere. For example, Bob Torricelli, a Democrat from New Jersey, decided to run for the Senate in 1996 rather than defend the House seat he had held for 7 terms. His hold on the seat was tenuous, however, having won his last election by a scant 53 percent. Further, he had not yet received a chair. When he won his Senate seat, however, he was placed on the powerful Finance Committee and was next in line to chair the committee’s Taxation and

IRS Oversight Subcommittee.⁶

Legislators who choose to run for higher office are likely to have held their seats for longer than those who maintain the status quo. Although they are likely to come from somewhat less safe Congressional seats, they should be electorally popular with their own party's members. Further, they should campaign hard, spending more money than their colleagues who remain in the House. At the same time, they will make little effort to appease their party within Congress, and will be no more ideologically proximate to their party than legislators who remain in the House. These predictions yield the following testable hypotheses of relevance to the theory, each of which makes a relational statement, comparing seekers of higher office to legislators remaining in the status quo:

H_{1.1}: Legislators who run for higher office will represent districts that are less electorally friendly to their party.

H_{1.2}: Legislators who run for higher office are no more ideologically distant from their party.

Receiving a committee chair

The last group, those receiving a committee chair, is the most theoretically important to this study. Legislators who receive committee chairs are likely to come from electorally safe districts, but are not likely to be much concerned about increasing their electoral chances in the district. Instead, they will place themselves ideologically more proximate to the party on those issues which the party deems most important. For example, Floyd Flake, a Democrat from New York, received 68 percent of the vote in his general election and had a voting record virtually identical to that of his party median before receiving a subcommittee chair in his fourth term.

We would expect legislators who receive committee chairs to differ from the rank and file in several ways. First, they should represent relatively safer districts. However, their *own* percentage of victory should be lower than that of the status quo, given the district's ideological proclivity. This is because they use their electoral safety to vote with the party in order to gain their favor, rather than resting on their favorable reelection fortunes. Further, they should be more ideologically proximate to the party, even taking into account the ideological proclivity of the district. They should be somewhat more experienced than the status quo legislator, both before they entered Congress and after they arrived. In other words, they should be more likely to have previous legislative experience, have more education, and be more senior. This is only logical, since seniority still matters in constructing the queue. These predictions yield the following empirically testable and relevant hypotheses:

H_{2.1}: Legislators who receive committee chairs will represent districts that are more electorally friendly to their party.

⁶...that is, of course, before his recent well-documented "retirement" from the Senate. An ethics investigation certainly abetted his decision process.

H_{2,2}: Legislators who receive committee chairs are less ideologically distant from their party.

Multinomial logit

Certainly, the estimation problem faced here is a duration model: We are more interested in determining what factors cause a shorter or longer wait until one receives a committee chair. Yet several other outcomes must not be ignored if one wishes to create a complete model of the queue process. Therefore, a typical duration model is not sufficient.

Instead, the problem suggests a “competing risks” specification. In other words, each legislator faces several different “risks” at each time period: A legislator may lose an election, she may retire from politics, she may run for higher office, she may receive a committee chair, or nothing different may happen. In order to take all of these risks into account, then, we must model them all.

There are several methods of estimating a competing risks model (See, for example, Kalbfleisch and Prentice 1980; Han and Hausman 1990; Petersen 1995). Perhaps the most straightforward is the multinomial logit model, advocated by Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004. The multinomial logit model provides a series of linked logit estimations, calculating estimates comparing probabilities of being in that group compared with the baseline category. The model is somewhat complicated by the fact that the data include outcomes for the same legislators over different periods. Therefore, the proper estimation procedure calculates robust standard errors, to account for clustering around each legislator.

The data

In an effort to test these hypotheses, I have collected data describing Democratic⁷ legislators who began their careers in the 98th through the 103rd Congress (1981-1989). I selected these periods because they provided enough time after the reforms of the 1970s to allow legislators to become accustomed to the new rules.⁸ Below, I describe the data in each of five categories.

Chairs

The dependent variable is a dichotomous variable, coded 1 if a legislator received a committee or subcommittee chair in a particular period, 0 otherwise.

⁷This analysis does not include Republican legislators, since seniority violations in determining committee ranking minority members were rare. I present preliminary results for the Republican regime in a moment.

⁸In fact, the analysis presented below does *not* apply to Congresses before the 98th. Including earlier Congresses greatly changes the results.

Ideology

Ideology in the context of this study is measured in two ways, both of which rely on Poole-Rosenthal DW-nominate scores. First, Dimension One is a measure of how far away the legislator's score is from the score of the median voter of the party on Poole and Rosenthal's first ideological dimension. Similarly, Dimension Two is a measure of how far away the legislator's score is from the the score of the median voter of the party on Poole and Rosenthal's second ideological dimension. Remember that the Poole and Rosenthal score is broken into two dimensions. The first is the ideological dimension of party cleavage, and the second is the ideological dimension that cuts across party (Poole and Rosenthal 1984, 1991). Given this understanding of the dimensions, then, we should expect Dimension One to be more important to the party than Dimension Two, since the party system is based on the first dimension.

Electoral

There are four electoral variables included in the analysis. First, Primary is the percentage of the vote the legislator received in the last primary election. This variable is meant to measure how popular the legislator is with his or her constituents of the same political party.⁹

Second, General is the percentage of the vote the legislator received in the last general election. This variable is meant to measure how popular the legislator is with all of the voters in his or her district, not just those of the same party. I can claim that the variable measures solely popularity of the legislator, since I also include a measure of support in the district for that legislator's political party.

That measure is President, the percentage of the vote received by the presidential candidate of the same party as the legislator in the last presidential election, subtracted from the vote that candidate received nationwide. The reason the subtraction is necessary is because I do not wish to confound the results with the effects of the presidential candidate himself. For example, one cannot logically claim that the vote share Michael Dukakis received in 1988 in a Congressional district is the functional equivalent of the vote share Bill Clinton received in that district in 1992. Because Clinton was much more popular than Dukakis, we would expect that a district with a large Dukakis vote share is much more Democrat than one with the same size Clinton vote share.

The last electoral variable is Spending, a measure of how much the legislator spent in his or her last election. It is included because legislators who are looking to run for higher office may spend more money, as may legislators who represent less electorally favorable districts.

⁹Note that some states and Congressional districts, such as those in Virginia, do not hold traditional primaries. For this reason, no data for Primary is available. Rather than listwise delete these observations, I use the mean of the variable as an imputed value for the variable in those observations. The substantive results of the analysis are no different if listwise deletion is used instead.

Experience

I include two variables to describe experience prior to being elected to the House of Representatives. The first is Law, a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the legislator attended law school, 0 otherwise. One would expect that legislators with legal training would be more able to shepherd complicated legislation through the committee system. If this is true, they would make more attractive candidates for committee positions.

The second variable is Legislative Experience, coded 1 if the legislator had previous legislative experience, having served in a state legislature, and coded 0 otherwise. One would expect that legislators with more legislative experience would also be better able to serve as a committee chair, thereby making them more attractive candidates for chair positions.

Committee assignments controls

We must also control for the committee assignments of legislators. When legislators receive particularly plum committee assignments, we should expect that they would be less likely to receive committee chairs, as the caucus would recognize that they had received a level of power from a different source. The first committee variable is Power, coded 1 if a legislator had received a power committee assignment¹⁰ committee, 0 otherwise. If a legislator receives a power committee, they have already received a great deal of power, since legislators on those committees affect some of the most important legislation the House considers.

The second committee variable is High Committee, a measure of the relative attractiveness of the legislator's most attractive committee assignment. The variable is measured using a metric devised by Groseclose and Stewart (1988) to rate attractiveness of committee assignments in the House. The measure is of particular use in this setting because it is constructed by considering legislators' relative willingness to transfer from a committee. This is especially useful because one would expect that legislators who serve on relatively unattractive committees would, *ceteris paribus*, receive committee chairs more quickly, simply by virtue of the fact that legislators who are before them in the queue more often leave the committee for a better assignment. Legislators who have very attractive committee assignments (defined as those committees from which legislators rarely depart) should, therefore, have longer waiting periods.

The third committee variable is Average Committee, a measure of the relative attractiveness of the legislator's entire package of committee assignments. The variable is also based on the Groseclose and Stewart scale, but this variable measures how attractive the entire committee package is by taking the average score of the committees to which the legislator is assigned. Note that because it is included with High Committee, the Average Committee variable will yield rather counter-intuitive results. Since we are already measuring the value of the highest committee, The measure of the complete assignment package is likely

¹⁰A "power" committee is defined as Appropriations, Rules, or Ways and Means.

instead to be a signal of how able the party believed the legislator to be prior to the formation of the queue for chair. Legislators who are deemed to have more ability will have a higher-quality package of committee assignments. Further, if queue-jumping occurs, one would expect that those legislators already deemed so would continue to be deemed more able and would therefore have a greater chance of receiving a committee chair.

Career controls

The variable Term is simply the number of terms the legislator has served in office. Therefore, the variable is a “counter” variable, keeping track of how much time has passed in the legislator’s career. Note that it is measured as terms *in office*, not terms on a committee. The reason for this is that we are interested in which legislators within Congress, not within particular committees, receive committee chairs most quickly. If we were to measure terms in committee, we would ignore the fact that the party controls committee assignments, and may hand them out strategically, in an effort to “fix” the queue in favor of more ideologically palatable candidates.¹¹ For example, if a legislator is deemed particularly unattractive by the party, he or she may be moved from a committee with a chair position likely to be available to a committee for which a chair is unlikely to become open. Were I to measure terms on a committee instead, the legislator’s failure to receive a chair may be attributed to his relatively short stint on the committee, rather than to the strategic move of the party. One would expect, therefore, that the variable would be significantly and positively related to one’s likelihood of receiving a committee chair.

The second career control variable is Period, a control for when the legislator first came to Congress. The variable is dichotomous, coded 1 if the legislator first arrived before the 101st Congress, 0 otherwise. Unfortunately, a more precise measure of when a legislator arrived in Congress is not possible, because only a few people from each first session appear in the different equations of the multinomial logit.¹²

Regression results

The results of the regression are reported in Table One.

Ideological distance

The ideological distance variables are significant only in the logit explaining who receives committee chairs. As predicted, the legislator’s ideological distance from the party on dimension one is negatively related to the probability of that legislator receiving a committee chair. In other words, the more proximate to

¹¹Indeed, it is precisely this activity I am trying to measure in this paper.

¹²When one does include the more precise measure, the standard errors for those coefficients are inflated to unrealistic proportions, but the substantive interpretations of the variables of interest are similar to those reported here.

Table One: Multinomial logit

Independent variables	Defeat	Retire	Higher office	Chair
Poole-Rosenthal Dimension One distance	-3.071 (3.002)	-2.443 (4.151)	1.880 (2.784)	-2.956** (1.476)
Poole-Rosenthal Dimension Two distance	0.2973 (0.7800)	-4.733 (2.918)	0.1174 (1.055)	1.524** (0.6165)
Legislator's vote received in last primary election	-0.01418 (0.01328)	0.04411 (0.02334)	0.03927** (0.01906)	-0.003406 (0.007912)
Legislator's vote received in last general election	-0.0102 (0.04074)	-0.03886 (0.04186)	-0.004651 (0.03459)	-0.0404** (0.01853)
Presidential candidate's vote recieved in last election	-0.09079** (0.03928)	-0.06880** (0.03210)	-0.08870* (0.04562)	0.05718** (0.01857)
Amount spent on last election	-0.0002015 (0.0007929)	-0.000224 (0.0008072)	0.001923** (0.0006196)	0.0003768 (0.0007415)
Attended law school (1 if true)	-0.2227 (0.4803)	1.151 (0.9882)	0.2379 (0.6468)	-0.7766** (0.3535)
Has state legislative experience (1 if true)	-0.3974 (0.5099)	-1.447** (0.7124)	-0.2448 (0.7112)	0.5673* (0.3446)
Serves on a power committee (1 if true)	-1.487 (1.128)	-0.3034 (1.207)	-1.193 (1.142)	-3.85** (0.7087)
Groseclose-Stewart highest committee	0.1941 (0.8658)	0.7809 (1.550)	0.2078 (1.275)	-1.152** (0.5882)
Groseclose-Stewart average committee	-0.3639 (1.134)	-0.6635 (1.578)	0.4349 (1.312)	1.816** (0.6305)
Number of terms served	-0.1452 (0.2618)	0.3233 (0.3260)	0.7537** (0.1960)	1.233** (0.1589)
First Congress 99th-101st (1983-86)	1.298** (2.186)	4.015* (1.014)	1.015 (0.7913)	0.6496 (0.4307)
Constant	2.864 (2.547)	-10.06* (5.733)	-6.430** (3.230)	-5.998** (1.198)
Log likelihood	-305.8	-308.5	-308.5	-308.5
N	499	499	499	499

* indicates statistical significance at the 0.10 level.

**indicates statistical significance at the 0.05 level.

Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors.

the party the legislator is, the more likely he or she is to gain a position of power on a committee. This result is important because it clearly shows that the process of receiving a chair is not solely based on seniority, despite the fact that seniority violations are rare. It is especially interesting because the result appears in a regression that takes into account the ideological position of the district, with the electoral variables described in the next section. Therefore, this result indicates that legislators who are even more ideologically proximate to their party than one would expect given their districts are the ones most likely to gain committee positions. So the result does not simply indicate that those whose districts are close to the party are more likely to gain power, even though this result alone would be enough to support a claim that it is more than a simple seniority rule that predicts committee chair assignments. Instead, this indicates that legislators, at least those who are successful at gaining committee power, are responding strategically to the threat of ideological queue-jumping by ideologically placing themselves closer to the party.

Interestingly, the results on the dimension two distance variable are significant, but in the opposite direction. Therefore, the further one is from the party on dimension two, the more likely one is to receive a committee chair. The reason for this result is likely to be in Poole and Rosenthal's (1984, 1991) explanation of the second ideological dimension. They claim that is it the ideological dimension that cuts across party lines, often thought to be "race" issues, broadly defined. Perhaps the result indicates that those legislators who are successful at gaining committee power are better able to appease their constituents by appealing to dimension two concerns, thereby leaving them free to creep closer to their party on those issues that matter to the party.

Election performance

The most surprising result from the coefficients on election performance is that it is the presidential election variable, not the incumbents' own vote share, that matters most in legislators' career decisions. Remember that presidential vote share is a measure of the relative level of partisanship in the district. It is significant for both the higher office and the committee chair equations. The direction of the variable, however, is different in each equation. Therefore, legislators who run for higher office represent *less* electorally friendly districts than those in the status quo category, while legislators who receive committee chairs represent *more* electorally friendly districts.

This suggests an interesting conclusion about progressive ambition in members of the House. Ambitious legislators are unhappy with the level of power they have as rank-and-file members of Congress. Those who represent less electorally friendly districts realize that, given the reforms of the 1970s, they cannot gain more power within the institution. They therefore attempt to gain their desired increase in power by pursuing other offices. This plan does not require them to move more ideologically proximate to the party, so they do not do so, thus explaining the result on dimension one ideological proximity. On the other hand, those who represent districts who are more electorally friendly attempt to

gain power within the House. They do so by continuing to be reelected, instead of trying for other offices, and also cast votes even more ideologically proximate to the party, thus explaining the result on dimension one ideology discussed in the previous section.

Also interesting, the general election variable is not significant in the higher office equation and is significant in the negative direction in the committee chair equation. This result indicates that legislators who choose to run for higher office do so because the general partisanship of their districts is unfriendly, regardless of how well they do in their own elections. Further, those who receive committee chairs have *lower* election results than those who do not. This is perhaps an indication of the effect of the proximity to the party described in the previous section. Rather than shoring up support back home, legislators from electorally friendly districts spend some of that good will to appease the party in an effort to gain power.

The last electoral variable is the amount of money the legislator spent on his or her last election. Interestingly, legislators who run for higher office spend more money on their reelection bids. This is likely due partly to their relatively less ideologically friendly districts. At the same time, they are also likely to be spending more money to increase their name recognition in anticipation of a bid for higher (and likely, statewide) office. The spending variable was not significant in the committee chair regression.

Previous experience

Not surprisingly, the number of terms served in office was significant in the direction hypothesized for both the higher office and the committee chair regressions. Therefore, the House appears to be something of a proving ground, at least for those legislators unable to gain institutional power, for higher office.

It is not enough simply to have served in the House. Instead, they must have served in it long enough to gain some experience and name recognition before making the attempt at another office. More important to the main topic of this project, the result on the committee chair regression indicates that a different type of seniority system remains in effect, despite the importance of ideological proximity to the party described above.

The other two experience variables did not fare as well. Neither was significant for the higher office regression. And although both were significant for the committee chair regression, the law school coefficient was not in the hypothesized direction. Therefore, having previous legislative experience increases one's probability of gaining a committee chair, but has no effect on one's probability of attempting to win a higher office. Further, having attended law school actually *decreases* one's likelihood of gaining a committee chair. Perhaps this is a response to somewhat negative connotations toward lawyers in the general public, or to the relative commonness among members of the House of having attended law school: Nearly half of the legislators in the data set (48 percent) had done so.

What about Republicans?

The evolutionary theory would imply that when Republicans took over the U.S. House of Representatives after the 1994 election, they should have begun following a similar system. The following section assesses the veracity of this conjecture.

Efforts to gather data on this question are stymied on two fronts. First, the relatively short amount of time Republicans have been in power limits the number of observations available. Second, Speaker Newt Gingrich's decision to ignore seniority in many committee and subcommittee chair decisions is likely to have affected the ability of new legislators to receive committee and subcommittee chairs. For example, Gingrich bypassed seniority and named Rick Lazio chairman of the Housing and Community Opportunity subcommittee of Banking and Financial Services Committee. The move was a coup for the second-term New York legislator, but meant a roadblock for the five newcomers to the committee. The young Lazio did not give up the seat for another five terms. With no chair available, the wait for the five continues. Indeed, all but ten of the original 71 members of the Class of '94 have yet to receive chairs.

This lack of variance notably decreases the amount we can learn about the health of evolutionary party loyalty in a post-Republican Revolution House. Nevertheless, the data from the Republicans is rather instructive, and is presented in Table Two. Note that the data is the same as that of the Democrats, with one exception. The "period" variable is omitted, since each of the legislators considered here began his or her term in the 104th Congress. It is not possible to include legislators since the 104th, because they have not spent enough periods "at risk" to yield useful results.

The shortage of chairs is immediately obvious from looking at the variables for the chair outcome. Indeed, none of the variables achieves statistical significance at the 0.05 level. Given this, however, it is notable that one of the two variables that achieve significance at the 0.10 level is the measure of the candidate's performance in the general election. Perhaps this is indicative of a continuing evolutionary process in the Republican House. It is interesting to note, however, that this result is different from that of the Democrats. Specifically, the Democrats' result showed that those who received committee chairs were associated with *lower* values for their own general election results, but *higher* values for the measure of party strength in their districts. Here, the relationship is reversed, and only the value for the general election is statistically significant. In other words, those candidates who receive a greater number of votes in their elections are more likely to receive committee chairs in the Republican regime.

Perhaps the most interesting results occur in the coefficients associated with running for a higher office. Here, ideology is explicitly important, and the result mirrors that of the results for Democrats receiving committee chairs. In the Democrat case, the regression showed that legislators who received chairs were ideologically closer to their parties on dimension one, further on dimension two. Indeed, as the evolutionary model might predict, the opposite is true for Repub-

Table Two: Multinomial logit for Republicans

Independent variables	Defeat	Retire	Higher office	Chair
Poole-Rosenthal Dimension One distance	-0.6417 (2.327)	12.06* (6.547)	6.102** (3.021)	0.06970 (2.092)
Poole-Rosenthal Dimension Two distance	-0.2413 (1.447)	-2.793 (2.555)	-2.370* (1.262)	-0.05460 (0.7962)
Legislator's vote received in last primary election	0.02973 (0.01874)	-0.04487* (0.02691)	0.004300 (0.01474)	0.008163 (0.01083)
Legislator's vote received in last general election	-0.4148* (0.2282)	-0.2413** (0.1228)	-0.06657 (0.08011)	0.09631* (0.05562)
Presidential candidate's vote recieved in last election	-0.2793** (0.1172)	-0.003898 (0.1326)	0.1208 (0.1004)	-0.06050 (0.05370)
Amount spent on last election	-2.50e-06 (2.10e-06)	5.74e-06* (3.27e-06)	3.75e-06** (1.44e-06)	-6.42e-07 (1.27e-06)
Attended law school (1 if true)	0.1898 (0.8492)	-3.191** (1.257)	0.4807 (1.150)	-0.05535 (0.5096)
Has state legislative experience (1 if true)	-1.011 (0.8839)	1.828 (1.382)	1.615 (1.052)	-0.7979 (0.4884)
Serves on a power committee (1 if true)	-39.25** (4.067)	3.129 (2.594)	2.667 (4.755)	4.188* (2.332)
Groseclose-Stewart highest committee	2.444 (1.738)	-2.132* (1.109)	1.0610* (0.5546)	-0.3759 (0.7235)
Groseclose-Stewart average committee	-2.727 (1.720)	1.838 (1.279)	-1.423 (1.114)	-0.7500 (0.5011)
Number of terms served	-1.132** (0.3982)	0.01709 (0.1847)	0.3121** (0.08655)	-0.1866 (0.1358)
Constant	32.04** (13.93)	1.304 (6.428)	-13.32** (4.579)	-4.163 (3.399)
Log likelihood	-123.2	-123.2	-123.2	-123.2
N	270	270	270	270

* indicates statistical significance at the 0.10 level.

** indicates statistical significance at the 0.05 level.

Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors.

licans who choose to run for higher office. Republican legislators who choose to quell their ambitions elsewhere are ideologically further from the party on the dimension of party cleavage, and closer on the second dimension.¹³ This indicates, as predicted by the evolutionary theory, that those legislators furthest the party on the dimension of party cleavage are more likely to run for another office, thus leaving the remaining House Republicans a more ideologically homogeneous group.

Certainly, the results presented here for the Republicans are preliminary. There have not been enough legislators “at risk” enough periods to be certain what their process is. But early indications seem to be that the less proximate legislators are leaving. This implies that more proximate legislators will receive committee chairs as they become open, which they have yet to do.

Conclusion

The most theoretically significant conclusion of this project is that the process of receiving committee and subcommittee chairs is not entirely a question of seniority. Instead, legislators who are more attractive to the party receive committee chairs more quickly than those who are not. This analysis has also shown that much of the reason for this result is because legislators who fear they may become victims of ideological queue-jumping run for another office rather than stay in the House long enough to see themselves skipped in the seniority line. Not only does the ideological location of the legislator’s district matter, but so does the voting record of the legislator.

In this context, then, the paper makes two contributions. First, it provides evidence of how parties can affect the decisions legislators make. Here, the party’s rules and norms can make the legislature a more attractive environment for those legislators who are most proximate to them. This fact will increase the likelihood that proximate legislators will stay and less proximate legislators will go, thus increasing the overall party loyalty of the legislature. Indeed, the effect does not need to be large to be important. Certainly, legislators consider a wide range of factors when making choices about their political futures. Yet the results above show that proximity to the party is one of the factors in the mix. This implies that the evolutionary result stands, regardless of how small the effect is. Further, the result has the added implication that constituents who are ideologically further from their parties within the legislature should experience more turnover of legislators and should be less likely to be represented by a legislator who has a position of power.

Second, the paper provides an example of another means to think theoretically about legislatures. If indeed, legislative institutions create environments that are more conducive to particular types of legislators than others, these institutions will not only affect short-run legislative outcomes, but also the long-run

¹³Note that this is not simply a “south” effect. The result is robust to adding a statistically insignificant dichotomous “south” variable.

makeup of the institution. The results presented here may indicate that evolutionary game theoretic approaches will be a fruitful means for future exploration of the effects of institutions on the behavior of individuals.

Appendix

Proposition: An evolutionary stable strategy exists in which the legislature is made up of a majority of legislators who desire the party's good and are proximate to the party, and a minority of legislators who neither desire the good nor are proximate to the party.

Proof: If we label the four types as follows:

- V,P: Values the good and is proximate to the party
- V, NP: Values the good and is not proximate to the party
- NV, P: Does not value the good and is not proximate to the party
- NV, NP: Does not value the good and is not proximate to the party

then we can depict the game in normal form, complete with expected utilities, as follows:

	V, P	V, NP	NV, P	NV, NP
V, P	0,0	2,-2	0,0	2,1
V, NP	-2,2	0,0	-2,0	0,0
NV, P	0,0	-1,-2	-1,-1	-1,-1
NV, NP	1,2	0,0	-1,-1	-1,-1

Because the type (V, NP) is strictly dominated by (V, P), the type (V, NP) will disappear from the game. Similarly, (NV, P) is strictly dominated by (NV, NP) and will also disappear from the game. Then, given the two remaining types, we can use a solution strategy similar to that for finding mixed strategy equilibria in traditional game theory, thus finding a stable mix of the remaining types. To determine this, we find the mixture at which the expected utility for type (V, P) is equal to that of (NV, NP). This occurs when $\frac{2}{3}$ of the remaining population is of type (V, P). Therefore, an evolutionary stable strategy exists when both type (V, NP) and type (NV, P) are eliminated, $\frac{2}{3}$ of the population is of type (V, P) and $\frac{2}{3}$ of the population is of type (NV, NP). Q.E.D.

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